

Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, who help keep Wellesley's open space clean! Another generous gift was received this year from the Wellesley Garden Study Group. The NRC is grateful to the House and Garden Club of Wellesley for their continued efforts to beautify Central Park, and to the Hills Garden Club of Wellesley for their continued efforts to beautify Clock Tower Park .
Thank you!

Many of the benches, trees and landscape in Wellesley are gifts to the Town in memory of someone dear. The Commission needs gifts to make additional improvements throughout Town and especially along the Fuller Brook Park. Will you help? Donors of \$200 or more will have their names and gifts recorded for posterity in the Charles B. Steward ledger on display in the Town Hall foyer.

Respectfully Submitted,

**NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
October 2005**

**Richard Bashian, Chairman
Neal Seaborn, Vice Chairman
Heidi K. Gross, Secretary
Joan E. Gaughan
Janet Hartke Bowser, Director**

REPORT OF THE PLANNING BOARD

Membership

On March 1, 2005, Frank S. DeMasi was elected to a five-year term.. On May 10, 2005, the Board reorganized for the upcoming year by electing Rose Mary Donahue as Chair, Thomas Frisardi as Vice Chair and Sue Wright as Secretary. The other Planning Board members are Edward H. Chazen. and Frank S. DeMasi.

On June 12, 2005 Chris Chan was appointed to fill the Associate Member position for a two-year term. The Associate Member is authorized to vote as a full member of the Board on special permit cases if for any reason one of the elected members cannot participate.

Comprehensive Plan

The Planning Board completed Phase I of the Comprehensive Plan Update for Wellesley and distributed compact disks to Town Meeting members and other Town officials at the Annual Town Meeting. The Board expects to complete Phase II of the Plan by the time of the 2006 Annual Town Meeting. The Comprehensive Plan contains recommendations and priorities for municipal planning, including zoning, land use, transportation, housing, open space, recreation and Town services. Maintaining an up-to-date Comprehensive Plan is a

requirement under State Law. The Planning Board last revised the Comprehensive Plan in 1994. The Planning Board has conducted a citizen survey on priorities regarding municipal planning issues. The project is guided by a 13 member steering committee composed of the members of the Planning Board and the following Town Meeting Precinct Representatives: A – Gerry Hume; B- Richard McGhee; C- Jackie Hatch; D- Joellen Toussaint; E- Hank Lysaght; F- Barbara McMahon; and G- Judith Hull. The consultant firm retained to assist in the effort is Goody- Clancy. The web site for the Comprehensive Plan Project is http://www.wellesleyma.gov/Pages/WellesleyMA_Planning/CompPlan.

2005 Annual Town Meeting

Fines for Zoning Violation (Article 22)

As requested by the Building Inspector the fines for violation of the Zoning Bylaws was increased from \$100 to the State allowed maximum of \$300 per day.

Covered Stair Landings (Article 23)

As requested by the Building Inspector stair landings, not over 25 square feet in area, can now be covered (with a roof) provided that the landings remain unenclosed. The previous provision allowed uncovered stair landings. The Planning Board agreed that sheltering outside stairs from the elements is an improvement in safety.

Inclusionary Zoning (Article 24)

The 2004 Annual Town Meeting established Inclusionary Zoning for commercial and multi-unit residential construction projects that trigger PSI review. This provision requires developers to contribute to affordable housing, either by construction of affordable units or by making a “payment in lieu” to the Wellesley Housing Development Corporation Trust Fund.

Adoption of this article extended Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw requirements to proposed residential subdivisions of five or more lots. The minimum ratio of affordable units to conventional units is 20 percent. The purpose is to respond to the affordable housing requirements mandated by the Commonwealth by requiring all applicants for these projects to contribute toward the Town’s affordable housing goal and to prevent new housing from causing the Town to lose ground in its quest to meet affordable housing numbers.

Use of Parking Lots (Article 25)

Adoption of this article established a special permit process to allow, subject to specific protections and safeguards, non-accessory parking on existing parking lots in residential districts such as those owned by schools and churches. Prior to the amendment such uses were not allowed. It was felt that with proper safeguards imposed during the permitting process the use could be beneficial in providing needed parking in congested areas without adversely affecting abutters.

Segmented or Phased Projects (Article 26)

Under this article Town Meeting adopted a provision that will address a concern that developers can evade PSI review by segmenting a project into two or more component projects each of which, standing alone, is smaller than the threshold for PSI review, but which, taken together, exceed the threshold. This provision allows a three year “look back” to prevent such abuses.

Fire Protection and Life Safety (Article 27)

Under this article the review of fire protection and life safety elements of PSI projects was expanded. Formerly the focus was on the “fire alarm system” an important but relatively minor consideration limited to the mechanical elements of the Town fire alarm system. The Planning Board worked with Fire Department officials in modernizing and updating this provision. The adoption of the article allows for a comprehensive review of emergency response and emergency planning related to major project by the Fire Department.

Pedestrian Safety (Article 28)

Under this article the review of pedestrian safety elements of a PSI project was expanded to include detailed analysis on sidewalk connections within 600 feet of a project and requires consideration of sidewalk links to other features in Town such as public transportation connections .

Drainage Review (Article 29) Recommendation - Adoption

Under this article Town Meeting adopted a new review procedure to meet National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) requirements. A committee of staff from Wetlands, Building, Engineering, Zoning Board of Appeals and Planning developed the article. The procedure provides review of site grading and drainage of all construction involving disturbance of one or more acres of land. Wellesley currently holds a conditional permit to discharge storm water (drainage from catch basins in public ways) into surface waters such as the Charles River. Under the permit, the Town must limit water-borne pollutants discharged into water bodies.

June 13, 2005 Special Town Meeting

Linden Street Corridor Overlay District (LSCOD) Article 4

The Special Town Meeting adopted a new overlay zoning district called the Linden Street Corridor Overlay District (LSCOD) for the 18.5 acres of land comprising the commercial property formerly owned by F. Diehl and Son Inc. owned by Eastern Development.

This project calls for:

Removal of three retail buildings on the northerly side of Linden Street (#170, 176 & 180), construction of three new retail buildings on the northerly side of Linden Street one of which would provide space for a 49,000 square foot Roche Brothers Supermarket and two other commercial buildings (one three-story, one two-story) closer to Linden Street;

Removal of the oil delivery business building and tanks (#161) and construction of a new two-story commercial building to be located near the railroad tracks;

Construction of an “in-fill” building of 2,250 square feet (between Professional Pharmacy and Linden Cleaners);

Possible future free-standing one-story bank building with drive-through window east of the current VW dealership building;

Retention and renovation of the other existing buildings;

Upgrade of Linden Street to provide a wider street with a center turn lane, fewer curb openings; a traffic signal at the main entrance, along with lighting, landscaping (one acre of new landscaped open space);

a new parking layout which will provide an increase of 243 parking spaces all to be 6” wider than the current spaces;

Provision of 7 units of affordable housing; and

Provision of 276,122 square feet of floor area (an increase over existing of approximately 50,000 square feet).

The Planning Board completed a study of the Linden Street commercial corridor in 2002. The Board and the Town is pleased to see many of the recommendations of that study reflected in the final development plan.

In summary those recommendations are:

a unified and coordinated design for building location, automobile circulation, truck access, parking layout and pedestrian circulation and safety;

reconstructed and re-landscaped of Linden Street with new sidewalks and curbing;

reduced number of driveway openings;

a “streetscape” with commercial buildings closer to the street line;

additional landscaped area to provide more green and shade as well as reducing storm water runoff.

increased pedestrian amenities to encourage walking rather than driving from one shop to another;

softer, lower lighting to reduce the lighting impact on the surrounding neighborhood.

Town Development Review Team (TDRT)

Consisting of elected and appointed officials from the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Board of Public Works and Town Counsel this group was initiated as an ad-hoc review team for the Linden Square development. TDRT worked countless hours to develop the structure of the zoning article that was subsequently adopted by the Town Meeting as well as the development agreement that was signed by the developers and the Selectmen prior to Town Meeting.

Highlights of the successfully negotiated, 43 point, development agreement are:

maximum overall floor area of 276,200 square feet;

maximum FAR of .35 and a minimum 18 % open space;

monetary payments to the Town in the range of \$7,000,000, portions of which are earmarked for specific purposes such as the reconstruction of Linden Street.

Tailby Parking Lot

The Tailby Parking Lot has been studied many times. Proposals have been made to construct a parking deck or garage to increase parking supply and to build multi-family housing. The 2002 Linden Street Corridor Master Plan recommended further study.

In 2004 the Board of Selectmen appointed a study committee with representation from the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) as well as major Town boards. CPC funding was provided to hire a consult to prepare a physical and financial feasibility study for redevelopment of the lot to include housing and parking. The firm Architerra was hired and the report was made available to the 2005 Annual Town Meeting. Planning Board member Edward H. Chazen served on this committee. The study concluded that currently the development of housing and parking is not financially feasible without substantial subsidization from the Town. It is hoped that state grant monies will be available for this worthwhile project which meets state goals for Transit Oriented Development (TOD).

Post Office Square

A task force was created by the Board of Selectmen with the goal of implementing recommendations contained in the 2003 study prepared with the assistance of StoSS Associates. This study was commissioned by the Planning Board as recommended in the 1998 Wellesley Square Study Action Plan. The task force included representatives of the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Police Department, BETA Group (the Town's traffic engineering consultant) and interested private citizens. This work is ongoing.

St. James Church

The Planning Board has submitted preliminary recommendations to the Boston Archdiocese and the Board of Selectmen concerning future use in the event this eight acre parcel comes on the market as a development site. Constraints of development were outlined such as the Flood Plain Zone, the Water Supply Protection District Status as well as the nearby inadequate culvert for Boulder Brook under Route 9. The interest and need of the Town for affordable housing was noted.

With respect to the church closure the Board commented to the Archdiocese that funds should be made available to study the traffic and parking implications of increased attendance at St. John's and St. Paul's parishes as a result of the closure.

Rockland Street Bridge

Six bridges over the MBTA Commuter Rail have been rebuilt over recent years. Rockland Street Bridge is an original structure dating to 1921 and is in poor condition. During this year the allowable weight limit was reduced to three tons (less than some SUV's.) Frank S. DeMasi, the Town's representative to and Vice-Chair of the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee has worked with other Town officials, Representative Alice Peisch and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in encouraging that this needed bridge reconstruction project is designed and bid as soon as possible.

Review of Unaccepted Streets

Since 1985 Section XIX of the Zoning Bylaw has provided that prior to the issuance of building permits for new houses on unaccepted streets the Planning Board must review and determine whether the street providing access to the lot is adequate. There are 105 unaccepted streets in Wellesley comprising approximately 12 miles of roadway. A number of inadequate ways have been upgraded at no cost to the Town since this provision was adopted. On a motion by the Planning Board under Article 37, the 2003 Annual Town Meeting adopted a change which requires that this determination of street adequacy now also be made prior to major residential reconstruction or additions (adding 50% or more coverage).

In this determination consideration is given to, public safety, availability of utilities, storm drainage and access for emergency vehicles. If the Board determines that the way is not adequate it will, with input from the Town Engineer, identify needed improvements.

During the course of the year the following unaccepted streets or portions thereof were reviewed and required improvements identified: Edgemoor Avenue, Highledge Avenue, Oakencroft Road, Morses Pond Road, Partridge Road and Walnut Place.

Scenic Roads

There are six roads in Wellesley that have been designated by vote of Town Meeting as Scenic Roads under state law; Benvenue Street, Cartwright Road, Cheney Drive, Pond Road, Squirrel Road, and Waterway/Brookway. The provisions of this law require the Planning Board to hold a public hearing and to review and approve the removal of any trees, stone walls or portions of stone walls along any designated Scenic Road. One application was filed for modification to a stone wall on Benvenue Street.

Review of Zoning Board of Appeal Petitions

The Zoning Bylaw provides that the Planning Board review all petitions which come before the Zoning Board of Appeal and offer comment on cases based on planning principles, legal requirements, fairness, maintaining the integrity of the Zoning Bylaw and Map, and what it believes to be in the best interest of the Town. The Board submitted comments recommending approval, conditional approval or denial regarding 100 petitions during the year.

Subdivision Control

The Planning Board continued its administration of four active subdivisions which are in various stages of development, Stonefield Lane, Beard Way, Buckingham Terrace and Burnet Lane.

The Planning Board reviewed and endorsed 11 plans as “Approval Not Required” (ANR) under the Subdivision Control Law.

Street Construction Bonds

The Planning Board requires bonds which it holds as surety for work to be done by private contractors in conjunction with new subdivision streets and for work to improve unaccepted streets to minimum standards. The Board is currently holding \$143,936 in street construction surety bonds.

Submission Fees

The Planning Department receives fees for submission of projects to be reviewed by the Planning Board, Design Review Board and Historic District Commission. The fees are intended to offset the cost of review and verification of impact reports, plans and other submission materials. The Planning Department received \$21,585 in submission fees. This money was submitted to the Town Treasurer for deposit.

Meetings

During FY-05 (July 1, 2004 - June 30, 2005) the Planning Board held 53 regular meetings, 2 public hearings, 7 meetings relative to the Comprehensive Plan project and 3 Inter-board meetings.

Citizen Inquiries

The Planning Department Office is open weekdays from 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. The staff assists citizens with questions concerning zoning requirements, setbacks, the process of project approval and scheduling of meetings with the Planning Board, Design Review Board and Historic District Commission. Frequently people are referred to the Planning Department by other Town Departments. It is estimated that the Planning Department handles approximately 100 such inquiries per week with approximately 25 % of these being involving in-office visits.

Regional Liaison

Associate Member Frank S. DeMasi is Wellesley's representative to the Regional Transportation Advisory Council (RTAC). Mr. DeMasi regularly attends meetings of RTAC, the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) which is the transportation planning agency for Greater Boston, and Metro West Growth Council which is the sub-regional planning agency which includes Wellesley and eight other communities. He also serves as the Town's alternate representative to the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). Wellesley's MAPC Representative is former Planning Board member Robert H. Murphy. Planning Board members and staff periodically attend seminars and workshops conducted in the area

concerning legislation and programs relative to town and regional planning including meetings on issues of relevance to the Town sponsored by Metro West. The Planning Board recommends that the Town renew its membership in this regional planning association in order to better keep up to date on state legislation and programs affecting our communities and to participate collectively with neighboring communities in promoting our interests and needs before State agencies.

Planning Staff

The Planning staff consists of a part-time secretary/technical assistant, a full-time planner and a full-time planning director. The Design Review Board, Historic District Commission, Housing Development Corporation and Fair Housing Committee receive professional and staff assistance from the Planning Department. All building projects involving an exterior change are reviewed except single and two-family projects outside the historic district. All expenses of these boards and all expenses associated with these reviews are absorbed within the Planning Board budget.

Web Site

The Planning Board maintains a web site at the following address: <http://www.wellesley.ma.gov/planning> . This web site includes updated information on the regular activities and special projects of the Planning Department. To view the web site for the Comprehensive Plan Project go to planning site and click on Comprehensive Plan.

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS

The Board of Public Works oversees the Department of Public Works (DPW), which consists of the following programs: Engineering, Park & Highway, Recycling and Disposal, Management Services, Water and Sewer. All of these programs are funded from general tax revenues except for the Water Program and the Sewer Program which, as enterprise funds, are funded exclusively by users fees.

In addition to the activities outlined in the reports of the individual DPW Divisions, some items of note this past year include surviving the fourth snowiest winter on record, receiving the highest revenue to date from the sale of recyclables, and the completion of the water main replacement on Great Plain Avenue. Also of note is the defeat of the 'basket' override request, which impacted the DPW by the elimination of a full time position at the Recycling and Disposal Facility, resulting in the RDF closing at noon three days each week, closing on Sundays, and the elimination of the Reusables Area. The Reusables Area was subsequently reopened through the efforts of volunteers.

In March 2005, William E. Charlton was re-elected to another three-year term on the Board of Public Works. In June 2005, Michael D. Humphrys was appointed to the Board of Public Works to fill, until the next Town election, the term vacated by Owen H. Dugan who was elected to the Board of Selectmen. Also in June 2005, William Charlton was elected Chairman, Michael Humphrys Vice Chairman and David Donohue Secretary of the Board of Public Works. These are elected positions, with the incumbents serving three-year terms.